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EXAMINER

MICHALSKI, JUSTIN I

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

2644

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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

# Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/699,922

Applicant(s)

ELLIOTT, BRIG BARNUM

Examiner

Justin Michalski

Art Unit

2644

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

## Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

## Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 30 October 2000.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

## Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-24 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 17-20 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-9,11-16 and 21-24 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 2 and 10 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

## Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

## Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- \* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

## Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 2.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s) \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_.

**DETAILED ACTION**

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

2. Claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Plunkett (US Patent 5,386,478).

Regarding Claim 1, Plunkett discloses a method for adjusting an audio level of an audio device (Figure 1), comprising: receiving a first audio signal (signal 12 L) from the audio device (system 18); receiving a data packet from the audio device, the data packet comprising a second audio signal (signal 12R); determining whether a difference between the first audio signal and the second audio signal exceeds a threshold value; and adjusting the level of the audio device when the difference between the first audio signal and the second audio signal exceeds the threshold value (Plunkett discloses corrections can be made when unbalances are found (i.e. threshold exceeded) (Column 3, lines 49-52)).

Regarding Claim 3, Plunkett further discloses determine whether the audio level is to be increased or decreased (Plunkett discloses making the necessary balance adjustments of gain controlled amplifiers which would include increasing or decreasing the audio level (Column 3, lines 49-52)).

Regarding Claim 4, Plunkett further discloses generating a data packet comprising a volume adjustment command, the volume adjustment command including a flag indicating that the audio level is to be increased or decreased, transmitting the data packet containing the volume adjustment command to the audio device (remote link 32), and adjusting the audio level based on the flag (Plunkett discloses corrections made through remote control 36 (i.e. generates data packet) to make necessary balance adjustments (i.e. adjusting audio level) of gain controlled amplifiers) (Column 3, lines 50-52).

Regarding Claim 7, Plunkett further discloses analysis (i.e. determining) (Column 3, line 49), based on the determining whether a difference between the first audio signal and the second audio signal exceeds the threshold value, an amount to adjust the audio level of the audio device, and wherein the adjusting includes: adjusting the audio level based on the amount (Plunkett discloses corrections can be made when unbalances are found (i.e. threshold exceeded) to make the necessary (i.e. based on amount) balance adjustment (Column 3, lines 49-52)).

Regarding Claim 8, Plunkett discloses a system for adjusting an audio level of an audio device (Figure 1), comprising: means for receiving at least one first audio signal (signal 12L) from the audio device (device 18); means for receiving a data packet from the audio device, the data packet comprising at least one second audio signal (signal 12R); means for determining whether a difference the first audio signal and the second signal exceeds a threshold value; and means for adjusting the audio level of the audio device when the difference between the first audio signal and the second audio signal

exceeds the threshold value (Plunkett discloses corrections can be made when unbalances are found (i.e. threshold exceeded) (Column 3, lines 49-52)).

Regarding Claim 24, Plunkett discloses a method for adjusting an audio level of an audio device (Figure 1), comprising: receiving a first audio signal comprising a plurality of sub-bands (signal 12L); receiving a data packet, the data packet comprising a second audio signal (signal 12R) and a plurality of sub-bands (Plunkett discloses separately controllable frequency bands (i.e. sub-bands) (Column 3, lines 66-68)); determining, for each sub-band, whether a difference between the sub-band of the first audio signal and a corresponding sub-band of the second audio signal exceeds a threshold value; and adjusting the audio level of a sub-band at the audio device when the difference between a sub-band of the first audio source and the corresponding sub-band of the second audio signal exceeds the threshold value (Plunkett discloses corrections (i.e. determining) can be made when unbalances are found (i.e. threshold exceeded) (Column 3, lines 49-52))..

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Plunkett (US Patent 5,386,478) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Konstantinou et al. (US Patent 6,584,201). Plunkett discloses a method as stated apropos of claim 1. Plunkett does not disclose a reactivity setting value, and wherein the adjusting occurs when a time period since a previous audio level adjustment equals or exceeds the reactivity setting value. Konstantinou et al. discloses a remote automatic volume control apparatus which polls for changes in sound every second to prevent continual fluctuations in emitted sound level (i.e. adjusts after one second (reactivity time) has passed since last adjustment) (Column 5, line 63 through column 6, line 1). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the reactivity time with the method disclosed by Plunkett to prevent continual fluctuations in the emitted sound.

5. Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Plunkett as applied to claim 1 above in view of Hadley et al. (US Patent 6,061,455). As stated above apropos of claim 1 Plunkett makes obvious all elements of that claim. Plunkett does not disclose the threshold value set by a user. Hadley et al. discloses an audio system where a low and high threshold level is selected by the user (Column 2, lines 45-50). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the user defined threshold with the method disclosed by Plunkett to create a more pleasing audio output for the particular user.

6. Claims 9, 11, 12, and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Plunkett (US Patent 5,386,478) in view of Sansur (US Patent 6,169,807).

Regarding Claim 9, Plunkett discloses a system for adjusting audio levels (Figure 1), comprising: a sensor (reference 10) configured to: receive a first audio signal (signal 12L), receive at least one data packet comprising a second audio signal (signal 12R), determine whether a difference between volume of the first audio signal and the second audio signal exceeds a threshold value, generate a response data packet when the difference exceeds the threshold value including a volume adjustment command (signal 32), and transmit the response data packet; and an audio device (references 18, 14R, and 14L) configured: transmit the first audio signal, transmit the data packet to the sensor, receive the response data packet, and adjust an audio level based on the response data packet. Plunkett does not disclose the first and second signals being average volume signals. Sansur discloses the use of monitoring (i.e. receiving) average audio levels to maintain a user defined volume level (Column 1, lines 50-57). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the use of average volume signals with the device disclosed by Plunkett to adjust the volume in order to produce a reliable method of comparing two signals.

Regarding Claim 11, as stated above apropos of Claim 9, Plunkett as modified makes obvious all elements of that claim. Plunkett further discloses the sensor is configured to determine whether the audio level of the audio device is to be increased or decreased (Plunkett discloses making the necessary balance adjustments of gain

controlled amplifiers which would include increasing or decreasing the audio level (Column 3, lines 49-52).

Regarding Claim 12, as stated above apropos of Claim 9, Plunkett as modified makes obvious all elements of that claim. Plunkett further discloses the response data packet further includes a flag indicating that the audio level of the audio device is to be increased or decreased, and the audio device is configured to adjust the audio level based on the flag (Plunkett discloses corrections made through remote control 36 (i.e. generates data packet) to make necessary balance adjustments (i.e. adjusting audio level) of gain controlled amplifiers) (Column 3, lines 50-52).

Regarding Claim 14, as stated above apropos of Claim 9, Plunkett as modified makes obvious all elements of that claim. Plunkett further discloses the sensor is configured to determine an amount of audio level adjustment, and store the amount in the response data packet (Plunkett discloses analysis is used to make correction sent through data packet 32 by sensor 36 to make necessary balance adjustments of gain controlled amplifiers) (Column 3, lines 49-52).

7. Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Plunkett as modified as applied to claim 9 above, and further in view of Konstantinou et al. (US Patent 6,584,201. As stated above apropos of claim 9, Plunkett as modified makes obvious all elements of that claim. Plunkett does not disclose use of a reactivity value. Konstantinou et al. discloses a volume control system which polls for changes in sound every second to prevent continual fluctuations in emitted sound level (i.e. adjusts after



one second (reactivity time) has passed since last adjustment) (Column 5, line 63 through column 6, line 1). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the reactivity time with the information sent by the data packet as disclosed in the method by Plunkett as modified to prevent continual fluctuations in the emitted sound.

8. Claims 15, 16, 21, 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Plunkett (US Patent 5,386,478).

Regarding Claim 15, Plunkett discloses a method for determining whether to adjust a volume of a remote audio device, the method comprising: receiving at least one first audio signal; receiving a data packet comprising at least one second audio signal; determining a difference between first audio signal and the second audio signal; comparing the difference to a threshold value; generating a volume adjustment command when the difference exceeds the threshold value; and transmitting the volume adjustment command to the remote audio device. Plunkett does not disclose the method being contained on a computer-readable medium. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made that the instructions for the method as disclosed by Plunkett could be implemented on a computer-readable medium and software program to take advantage of computer technology's fast and accurate ability to process data.

Regarding Claim 16, Plunkett discloses a method comprising: transmitting at least one first audio signal; generating a data packet, the data packet comprising at

least one second audio signal; transmitting the data packet to a remote device; receiving a volume adjustment command from the remote device, the volume adjustment command comprising a flag indicating that the volume level is to be increased or decreased and adjusting the volume level in response to the flag. Plunkett does not disclose a computer-readable medium for controlling a processor to perform the volume adjustment. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made that the instructions for the method as disclosed by Plunkett could be implemented on a computer-readable medium and software program to take advantage of computer technology's fast and accurate ability to process data.

Regarding Claim 21, Plunkett discloses a volume setting field that stores a value representing a volume setting of an audio device and an audio sample field that stores at least one audio sample. Plunkett does not disclose being contained on a computer-readable medium. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made that the method as disclosed by Plunkett could be implemented on a computer-readable medium and software program to take advantage of computer technology's fast and accurate ability to process data.

Regarding Claim 23, Plunkett discloses a destination address field that stores a destination address; and a volume adjustment command field that stores a value indicating that a volume of an audio device is to be adjusted. Plunkett does not disclose being contained on a computer-readable medium. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made that the method as disclosed by Plunkett could be implemented on a computer-readable medium and software

program to take advantage of computer technology's fast and accurate ability to process data.

9. Claim 22 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Plunkett as applied to claim 21 above, and further in view of Konstantinou et al. (US Patent 6,584,201). As stated above apropos of claim 21, Plunkett makes obvious all elements of that claim. Plunkett does not disclose reactivity setting value. Konstantinou et al. discloses a volume control device which polls for changes in sound every second to prevent continual fluctuations in emitted sound level with the one-second value being stored in device 10. (Column 5, line 63 through column 6, line 10). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the reactivity time with the method disclosed by Plunkett to prevent continual fluctuations in the emitted sound.

#### Allowable Subject Matter

10. Claims 2 and 10 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, set forth in this Office action and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

11. Claims 17-20 are allowed.

***Conclusion***

12. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Williamson, III (US Patent 5,369,711) discloses use of gain control using average signal levels.

Yamashita (US Patent 5,615,256) discloses a sound volume control using a software program.

13. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Justin Michalski whose telephone number is (703)305-5598. The examiner can normally be reached on 8 Hours, 5 day/week.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Bill Isen can be reached on (703)305-4386. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703) 872-9306.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703)305-3900.

JIM

  
**XU MEI**  
**PRIMARY EXAMINER**